

Who was Jesus of Nazareth?

**4. What Can Be Discerned
About Jesus From His
Words Concerning Himself**

Outline of Presentation

1. Introduction
2. Did Jesus Affirm That He Was the **Messiah?**
3. Did Jesus Affirm That He Was the **Son of God?**
4. Did Jesus Affirm That He Was the **Son of Man?**
5. Summary

Introduction

Goals: to explore:

- Jesus' use of the titles Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man for himself,
- his acceptance of such titles applied to him by others

Cautions:

- Jesus' lack of use of a particular title for himself does not mean that the later Christian understanding that he was the Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man is wrong
- Jesus could have been conscious of possessing the relationship to God implied in the titles without using the titles (i.e. without having the terminology to express it)

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah?

Early Church clearly believed Jesus was the Messiah

- Greek *Christos* = the expected *anointed* [king of the House of David]
- “Christian” = one who accepted Jesus as Christ

Question: did early Christians project a post-resurrectional faith back onto scenes of Jesus’ life? or did Jesus actually say he was the Messiah?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Peter's Confession

Peter's Confession (Mark 8:29-33; Matt.
16:15-23; Luke 9:20-22)

- “Who do people say that I am / the Son of Man is?”
- “You are the Messiah / the Messiah of God / the Messiah, the Son of the Living God”
- also a parallel in John 6:66-71: Peter confesses Jesus “Holy One of God”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Peter's Confession

Jesus' Reaction:

Mark, Luke: Jesus does not deny he is the Messiah, but says to tell no one

Part of a picture in which Jesus does not explicitly accept the designation "Messiah" until the necessary element of suffering is not overlooked

Peter does not understand this: he rebukes Jesus when Jesus talks of the need for Son of Man to suffer

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Peter's Confession

Conclusion: suggests:

- Jesus' followers hailed him as the Messiah
- Jesus may have thought it involved some misunderstanding of who the Messiah was, but he did not deny their designation

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? High Priest's Question at Sanhedrin Trial

High Priest's Question at the Sanhedrin Trial
(Mark 14:61-62, Matt 63-64; Luke 22:67-69)

Mark/Matt.: “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed / the Son of the Living God?”

Luke: Messiah and Son of God questions separated

Parallels in John: Messiah question during Jesus' ministry (John 10:24-25)

Where did the Jewish authorities get the idea Jesus might be the Messiah?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? High Priest's Question at Sanhedrin Trial

Jesus' answer:

Mark: "I am"

Matt.: "That is what you say."

Luke: "If I tell you, you will not believe;
and if I ask you, you will not answer."

John's parallel: "I told you, and you do
not believe."

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah?

High Priest's Question at Sanhedrin Trial

Conclusions:

- Jesus did not deny he was the Messiah
- He was however wary when opponents used the title of him because they would not believe or understand him

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Samaritan Woman in John 4:25-26

Samaritan Woman's confession of faith "I know that a/the Messiah is coming. . ."
Jesus: "I, the one speaking to you, I am (he)."

Problem: Samaritans did not expect the Messiah; they had rejected the covenant between God and David

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? “The King of the Jews”

Pilate asks Jesus if he was the “King of the Jews” in all four gospels (Mark 15:2, Matt 27:11,17,22; Luke 23:2; John 18:33)

Strong case has been made for the historical accuracy of the title on the cross “The King of the Jews”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah?

Early Christian Confession of Jesus as the Messiah

Is it plausible that early Christians who identify themselves as followers of Jesus the Messiah if there had been no reference to him as the Messiah before he died?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Conclusions

The issue of Jesus as the Messiah did arise during his lifetime

“...some of those arraigned against him, Jews and/or Gentiles, thought that he or his followers claimed that he was the Messiah [king].”

the “followers of Jesus during his lifetime confessed him as the Messiah.”

“Jesus ever denied that he was the Messiah” but
“Jesus never clearly or enthusiastically accepted the title in the sense in which both followers and opponents proposed it for him.”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Introduction

Calling someone “son” in relation to God is ambiguous. It may imply only a special relationship to God. For example:

- angels in OT: “sons of God”
- Davidic king: treated as God’s son
- nation of Israel referred to as God’s son in

Hosea 11:1

For Christians “Son of God” implies a *unique* relationship with God

- Question: Did Jesus call or consider himself the “Son of God”
- (Different from question: Was Jesus the “Son of God”)

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to God as Father

Jesus spoke of God as “my Father;” never
said “our Father”

Some Problems. *First:*

- “my Father;” mostly in Matt. (0 in
Mark 4 in Luke)
- no Synoptic parallels to Matthew's use
of “my Father”
 - Matt 12:50 vs. Mark 3:35/Luke 8:21
 - Matt 26:29 vs. Mark 14:25

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to God as Father

Some Problems. *Second:*

Jesus Frequently speaks to disciples of
“your Father:”

- Matt 7:21, Matt 18:14

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God?

Jesus' References to God as Father

Some Problems. *Third:*

Argument has been made that Jesus addressing God as “Abba” (Aramaic) was distinctive. *Abba* = “Daddy”

Problems:

- *Abba* transliterated Aramaic appears only in Mark 14:36
- *abba* as “daddy” after 200 AD; was *abi* 200 BC to 200 AD

Nonetheless: Jesus' use was distinctive.

Abba rarely used as personal address for God in other literature of the time

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to God as Father

Some Problems. *Fourth:*

- even John -- who makes distinction Jesus
Son (*huios*) of God vs. Christian
believers as children (*tekna*) – uses
Father language broadly
- John 20:17 “I am ascending to my
Father and your Father.”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to God as Father

Conclusions. We can at least say this:

“If Jesus presented himself as the first of many to stand in a new and special relationship to God as Father, that priority implies his sonship was in some way superior to the sonship of all who would follow him.”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God?

Jesus' References to Himself as Son

Jesus in John's gospel clearly proclaims himself
the Son of God

John 3:16: "God's only Son"

John 10:30: "The Father and I are one."

John 14:9: "Whoever has seen me has seen
the Father."

Problems posed by scholars:

- John last gospel
- represents a developed understanding of
who Jesus was by the Johannine
community; gospel was written to show
the understanding that Jesus Son of God

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to Himself as Son

Passages in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus
Speaks of Himself as Son

- Matt 11:27, Luke 10:22: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.”

Called the “Johannine logion”

- Mark 13:32: “Of that day or the hour no one knows, not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Why would early church add “Son” to passage speaking of limitations of Jesus' knowledge?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to Himself as Son

Passages in the Synoptic Gospels where

Jesus Speaks of Himself as Son (cont)

- Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard

(Mark 12:1-12).

- comparison likely goes back to

Jesus: son stands in the line of
martyred and rejected prophets

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to Himself as Son

Conclusions (if you discount John):

- “it likely that Jesus spoke and thought of himself as “the Son,” implying a very special relationship to God that is part of his identity and status”
- he never indisputably uses the title “Son of God” for himself

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man? Introduction

There is massive scholarly disagreement about:

- was “Son of Man” a title known in Jesus’ day?
- what “Son of Man” means
- whether Jesus actually used it of himself

Statistics:

- terms “Messiah” and “Son of God” infrequent in the gospels
- term “Son of Man:” 80 times in the gospel, all but 2 Jesus referring to himself

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Introduction

Did Jesus actually use this title for himself?

- Why would early church have retrojected this term so frequently – as opposed to “Son of God” or “Messiah”?
- its frequent use suggests it was particularly remembered as coming from Jesus

What did Jesus mean when he spoke of himself as “Son of Man”? Was there a first century Jewish meaning to this title?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Was there a Jewish Concept of the Son of Man?

Jewish apocrypha

- suggests a first century Jewish expectation for a specific human figure who would be an instrument of divine judgment. Called “Son of Man” because he embodied the destiny of righteous human beings.
- reflections on Daniel 7: “one like a son of man” to whom God would give glory and dominion
- *I Enoch, IV Ezra (II Esdras)*

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Was there a Jewish Concept of the Son of Man?

Parables section of *I Enoch*: “Son of Man:”

- “face had the appearance of a human being”
- he is like one of the holy angels, but has a rank higher than the angels
- named in the presence of the Lord of Spirits before the sun and stars created
- “the Elect One”
- the Messiah
- seated at the throne of glory
- has a judgment role

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Was there a Jewish Concept of the Son of Man?

Suggests there may have been a concept of “Son of Man” in Jewish apocalyptic thought that Jesus was familiar with. The “Son of Man” was:

- messianic human figure
- heavenly preexistent origin
- gloried by God
- made a judge

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

If there was no Jewish Concept of the Son of Man

Most scholars feel “Son of Man” was a title made up by Jesus or his followers, perhaps based on their own reflection on Daniel 7 and other OT passages (Ps 110, perhaps Ps 80:18)

Jesus sense of its meaning: Mark 14:61-62 & par.:

- “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”
- “I am, and you will see the *Son of Man* seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven””

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Conclusions

- it is likely this was a term used by Jesus himself
- Daniel 7's apocalyptic portrayal of "one like a son of man" who is exalted by God and endowed with kingship was likely part of Jesus' understanding of his mission

Conclusions

Although friends and foes claimed he was the Messiah, Jesus did not enthusiastically embrace this title, perhaps because of their misunderstandings about the title

Jesus pictured himself in a filial relationship to God, calling God “Father” and talking of himself as “Son.”

- his sonship was prior / foundational to the believers becoming “children” of God

Conclusions

Jesus' use of term "Son of Man," (whether based on prior Jewish reflection on Daniel 7 or his own), shows how he felt about himself as an instrument of God's plan: "the specific human figure whom God glorifies and through whom God manifests the final triumph."

Reference and Source

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